

Organization Studies

<http://oss.sagepub.com>

**Book Reviews : C. J. Lammers: *Organisaties Vergelijkenderwijs* 1983,
Utrecht: Het Spectrum. 552 pages**

J.M. Pennings

Organization Studies 1984; 5; 371

DOI: 10.1177/017084068400500414

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://oss.sagepub.com>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



<http://www.egos-euro.org>
European Group for Organizational Studies

Additional services and information for *Organization Studies* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://oss.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://oss.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

collected information on measurable features of all governments the world over from the end of World War II to the 1970s, and on this basis is able to analyse changes in government composition, e.g. the incidence of different forms of party government, and changes in the size of governments. One of his notable conclusions is that political parties have not succeeded in taking over governments; in particular, neither the coalition formula, nor that of the single party has proved capable of forming a durable base for many governments outside the Western and Eastern Communist spheres (p. 123).

Though Blondel points out himself that in this study he cannot treat the question of governmental effectiveness, it becomes very clear that he evaluates the cabinet system quite critically, finding it well suited to the developing party systems of the 20th century, but — in spite of all structural accommodations — unable to cope with the full range of coordination and administration problems Big Government faces. By virtue of the same argument he sees certain functional advantages in a dualistic government structure.

Whether one accepts his evaluative conclusions or not, Blondel's book certainly fills a gap in the existing literature though it also demonstrates indirectly what kinds of insights cannot be expected from such a comprehensive and quantifying approach.

C. J. Lammers: *Organisaties Vergelijkenderwijs*

1983, Utrecht: Het Spectrum. 552 pages.

J. M. Pennings
The Wharton School,
University of
Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia,
USA

For the sake of convenience we may classify most contributions to organization theory as having either a dimensional or a typological orientation. Most authors seek to disentangle and synthesize the complexities of their subject matter by exploring patterns of relationships among variables or dimensions (e.g. power, effectiveness) while others establish taxonomies with profiles for each type (e.g. mechanistic vs. organic structure). While Lammers straddles the two orientations, he leans quite heavily towards a typological approach. His book documents a great deal of typological research — both conceptual (e.g. Touraine, Dore and Udy) and empirical (e.g. Tannenbaum, Burns and Stalker and the PEP Study). Furthermore, in the concluding chapters he provides two classification schemes which become the retroactive organizing principle of his book. First he develops a six-fold organization typology each with a distinct profile; secondly he provides a two-fold typology of the contributions in organization theory.

At the outset, Lammers employs the metaphors of tree, forest and landscape to categorize contributions to organization theory. We could extend those metaphors and suggest that Lammers' book represents a cartographic atlas providing various maps of the field. These maps have been slightly altered and enriched with additional meaning as a result of Lammers' efforts to condense and redraw them. He has a remarkable command of the literature, whether it

be old or new, European or American, theoretical or empirical. Unlike real atlases this book does not display an ethnocentric bias! Therefore, it is not an overstatement to say that the book represents a very comprehensive overview of organization theory. Being a polyglot has enabled Lammers to be more comprehensive than his Anglo-Saxon, German or French counterparts.

The first chapters give a historic survey of the literature followed by two 'comparative' chapters: one chapter covers literature comparing organizations institutionally (e.g. religious, health care and business organizations); a second one explores literature having a process focus (e.g. Bendix, Udy, Touraine). The author adds his own six-fold typology as a conclusion to the typological, comparative voyage. The sextet includes action, traditional, mechanistic, organic-mechanistic, organic and cooperative types. The types differ on a number of *a priori* attributes which Lammers clusters into three subsets: form attributes (e.g. size, specialization), control attributes (e.g. stratification, internal communication) and cohesiveness (e.g. attachment, positive sanctions). Unfortunately, he dwells only a mere three pages on justifying this typology. Fortunately, his sextet also illustrates the limits of typologies as means of data reduction and synthesis. Typologies which differ from naturally occurring categories and which are complex or cumbersome have little serendipity and tend to disappear into oblivion.

The short discussion of the six-fold organizational typology is followed by Lammers' well-known literature typology of 'system' model and 'party' model. He argues that all literature can be reduced to any of these conceptual models or 'theoretical orientations'. Most authors have a bias towards one or the other. Once in a great while there is a rare sociologist (e.g. Alvin Gouldner) who succeeds in employing them jointly.

This discussion as well as the concluding chapter should be considered the most interesting because they give a better exposure to Lammers' own thinking. For example he contrasts his system-party typology with the Burrell and Morgan one. He is quite candid in expressing his doubts about the validity and viability of their interpretive and neo-Marxist paradigms. Part of that scepticism is due to his strong adherence to organizations as the unit of analysis. As a result he relegates some significant recent contributions to a footnote-like paragraph. Those contributions include the ones having a more social psychological, individual bias (e.g. Silverman or the ignored Karl Weick) and those that treat organizations as elements of larger entities such as markets or industries (e.g. Hannan and Freeman's population ecology).

The description of future perspectives shows likewise a bias by his acts of commission and omission. Nevertheless this description contains insightful and stimulating comments on the theories of bureaucracy and structural contingency and ought to be made accessible to readers who cannot cope with the Dutch language. Hopefully Lammers will also serve us this dessert in English.